

Republicans last year, gone are the \$88 billion cuts they wanted to do to Medicaid, no more talk about doing away with the Department of Education, the Department of Commerce, no more suggestion that the Environmental Protection Agency should be stripped of its power and its funds.

Now, I believe this radical revolution is over with this budget deal. Could this budget deal be better? Yes, of course, it could. One way, Mr. President, it could be better if we kept our tax cuts moderate and targeted them to the middle-class. We could reach balance sooner. We would still have resources left to do more for our children and our communities.

What Senator DURBIN and I—and it is cosponsored by Senators DASCHLE, HARKIN, and BUMPERS—what we say in our amendment, and I am very pleased it will be accepted, is that a substantial majority of the tax cut benefits provided in the reconciliation bill will go to middle-class working families earning less than approximately \$100,000 per year and that the tax cuts in the reconciliation bill will not cause revenue losses to increase significantly in the years after 2007.

In other words, we have two points to our amendment. One is tax cut benefits go to the middle-class; and two, we do not want to see an explosion of deficits in the outyears.

Mr. President, I am pleased that the chairman is accepting this. I am pleased we are walking down this path together. I really will watch this because we have no assurance that this amendment will be kept in the conference, but we will keep our eye on it because I suspect if we insisted on a vote we would get a near unanimous vote.

I am hopeful we can keep this language in the bill itself. If it is stripped out, Mr. President, I will be back once we get to the reconciliation bill, to make sure that tax cuts are not going to the people who are earning \$1 million but are, in fact, going to our hard-working families who earn approximately \$100,000 a year.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. Again, my thanks to the Members of the Budget Committee. This has been a long time in coming. It is not the perfect budget but I think it puts an end to the radical revolution that was threatened a couple years ago and it will bring us to balance. It is good for our children, and overall I am pleased with it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Alaska.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. STEVENS. I ask unanimous consent there now be a period for the transaction of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 16

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute reports that for the week ending May 16, the U.S. imported 7,834,000 barrels of oil each day, 52,000 barrels more than the 7,782,000 imported each day during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 54.8 percent of their needs last week, and there are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf War, the United States obtained approximately 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Anybody else interested in restoring domestic production of oil—by U.S. producers using American workers? Politicians had better ponder the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off our supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the United States—now 7,834,000 barrels a day.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, May 20, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,346,367,814,885.12. (Five trillion, three hundred forty-six billion, three hundred sixty-seven million, eight hundred fourteen thousand, eight hundred eighty-five dollars and twelve cents)

One year ago, May 20, 1996, the federal debt stood at \$5,114,233,000,000. (Five trillion, one hundred fourteen billion, two hundred thirty-three million)

Five years ago, May 20, 1992, the federal debt stood at \$3,921,030,000,000. (Three trillion, nine hundred twenty-one billion, thirty million)

Ten years ago, May 20, 1987, the federal debt stood at \$2,291,944,000,000. (Two trillion, two hundred ninety-one billion, nine hundred forty-four million)

Fifteen years ago, May 20, 1982, the federal debt stood at \$1,068,510,000,000 (One trillion, sixty-eight billion, five hundred ten million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,277,857,814,885.12 (Four trillion, two hundred seventy-seven billion, eight hundred fifty-seven million, eight hundred fourteen thousand, eight hundred eighty-five dollars and twelve cents) during the past 15 years.

INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF ASYLUM ERODING

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, every year the respected U.S. Committee for Refugees issues a review of the state of the world's refugees. This yearly review has earned worldwide respect as the most authoritative compilation of analyses, data, and thought-provoking information on refugees. The 1997

World Refugee Survey, released yesterday is especially troubling. The Committee finds that many countries which were once considered safe havens for refugees and asylum seekers are beginning to turn their backs on persons fleeing persecution.

The report estimates that the number of refugees and asylum-seekers decreased last year to about 14.5 million worldwide. But this apparent decrease is misleading. The Committee attributes it in part to the higher barriers to asylum erected in many countries last year, including the United States. In addition, some countries have begun to forcibly repatriate refugees back to their home countries, even if conditions in those countries have not improved. For example, Thailand has recently begun to forcibly return Burmese refugees to their persecutors in Burma.

There is some good news. Several countries, including Guatemala, Haiti, Mozambique, and Cambodia, have improved their human rights situations, so that some refugees have been able to return to their homes.

Sadly, the overall message of the report is that basic long-standing international principles of asylum and refugee protection are in trouble. As this report points out, the United States bears a share of responsibility for this problem. The summary exclusion provisions of last year's immigration law, and the continued detention of asylum-seekers sets a poor example for other countries which look to the United States for guidance on asylum and refugee protection.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a U.S. Committee for Refugees press release be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

ASYLUM ERODING IN MORE COUNTRIES, REPORT FINDS; REFUGEES' LIVES, PROTECTION PRINCIPLES ENDANGERED

WASHINGTON, DC.—Asylum for refugees around the world is eroding in more countries than ever before, as governments, including those traditionally friendly to refugees, either close their borders completely or offer "pseudo-asylum" that lacks adequate protection, the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) said today.

"We are seeing a continuing deterioration in the quality of protection and assistance countries are willing to offer to those fleeing persecution and violence," said USCR Director Roger Winter in releasing USCR's 1997 World Refugee Survey. "This pseudo-asylum not only endangers the lives and well-being of refugees, but threatens to kill the principle of asylum itself," Winter said.

USCR's World Refugee Survey is considered the preeminent source for information on the worldwide refugee situation, and this year's Survey includes 120 detailed country reports, 12 statistical tables, and essays on deteriorating asylum standards.

The 1997 World Refugee Survey provides examples of countries either shutting their doors to asylum seekers or offering pseudo-asylum in the past year.

The international community deprived Rwandan refugees of true asylum by ignoring serious protection problems in refugee